

Sex education: working or not? assignment

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The difference between effective and ineffective sex education relies on how well students are informed on both the biological and the psychological workings of sex. Depending on the overall effectiveness of their sex education, students' lives can be severely affected, for better or for worse. Young people have a fundamental right to be instructed on accurate, unbiased information about their anatomies and sexuality. Therefore effective comprehensive sex education should be taught in every school, leaving students with knowledge that will allow them to act responsibly in regards to their sex life.

The role that sex education plays in the initiation of sexual activity is controversial, mostly due to the stigma of sexuality in schools. In fact, there are many parents who prefer to have their children go without formal sex education just as there are many reasons why a person may not want their child to learn about sexuality. Most of us "don't take challenges to our opinions of what is right or wrong about sexual behavior lightly." (Henslin). These personal reasons can range from religion, shame, or simply wanting to protect their child from the dangers of sex.

In addition, it is commonly believed that sex education encourages sexual activity. Apart from excluding these programs, abstinence-only education programs often fail at informing students as well and instead focus on the introducing students to biased and alarmingly inaccurate information. "The option to have sex is just as important as the option to not have sex" (Lafferty). Even so the option to choose can be easily influenced. Abstinence-only programs are a prime example of this influence, these

programs are known to persuade students to undergo an abstinence pledge, which commits them to refrain from sex until marriage.

Do abstinence pledges work? As many as 1 in 8 teenagers take this pledge but does it more likely than other teens to delay sexual activity? A recent study, published in the journal *Pediatrics* made the conclusion that “while most teens wait until 17 to lose their virginity, those who take the pledge normally wait until they’re at least 21” (Boonstra). However, further research has shown that a young person’s background, such as their dedication to their religion, has a much larger impact on how long they wait to lose their virginity than just simply taking the pledge.

Other statistics, done by the US Department of Health, show that very few people, only 5 percent of all Americans, choose to be abstinent until marriage. With this information one can conclude that the pledge does not work how it’s intended and that the uninformative subject matter of abstinence-only education is not helpful for nearly every teenager. Abstinence pledges do no harm, but students that do pledge should do so without basing their goals on biased information.

Biased information, presented as fact, should never belong in a school’s curriculum, especially when it comes to the immensely critical and personal subject of sexuality. All of twelve US states require medically accurate sex ed. That means that schools in 38 states can choose whether or not to educate teenagers on the biological aspects of sex. This includes educating them about their own anatomy, which if not done, puts teens at a much

higher risk of accidental pregnancy and STIs than they would be otherwise.

Why is it that only 8 states require that the information be unbiased?

There are abstinence-only programs out there that are not above deceiving their students and instilling shame and fear using lies and other techniques. For example, if a program does talk about STIs, it's not to teach students about ST's, instead it is to show them the most gruesome, extreme scary pictures they can find. If they talk about birth control, they exaggerate the rates of failure, and say that it's not a reliable way to prevent pregnancy. They make girls scared by telling them they'll be branded as less than if they have sex.

They go on to say that sex before marriage will ruin your relationship and some even go as far as saying that if you have sex, a chemical will be released in your brain that will make you attached to the person forever. This isn't clearly not education, it is purely antisex propaganda. And the worst part about it is that it doesn't help to curb STIs, or pregnancy, and it doesn't stop people from having sex. It just ensures that when people do have sex, that it's the most guilt-ridden, unenjoyable and uninformed experience possible.

Not to mention the most dangerous. Rates of STIs and teen pregnancy are higher in The United States than in most other industrialized countries. Teen pregnancy is considered both a social and a political issue. Both the Democratic and Republican parties share a political goal to limit teen pregnancy, what differs is their avenues of reductions. In general the Republican Party cites a need to return to conservative values, sometimes

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citing abstinence, whereas the Democratic Party cites the need for more access to birth control and sexual education.

The two solutions for a drastic reduction in pregnancy rates can either come from teens having less sex or by teens using more contraceptives. “

Researchers have analyzed the role of both over the last several decades, and they have concluded that the declines can primarily” although not exclusively” be attributed to improvements in teens’ contraceptive use” (TOAH). Today, pregnancy, birth, and abortion rates are at a historical low.

The national teen pregnancy rate has declined almost continuously over the last two decades. Comprehensive sex education is imperative to retaining, and further advancing these positive trends.

Allowing such methods in schools helps to put into motion all the widespread goals that are specified for virtually every type of sex education program. “

Research shows that giving kids information that they need to make healthy informed decisions about sexuality actually delays the age that they first have sex and that it lowers pregnancy rates and STIs” (Tampkins). When it comes to sex education in America, when are teens suppose to figure out how to prevent STIs and pregnancy, how to communicate and foster a healthy relationship? Where do they learn about what consent looks like?

These are huge factors to retaining a positive sex life and yet there are very few programs that will make the effort to include any of these issues. There is a problem with false information, information that is meant to do well but it only denying the reality of the situation. These policies of ignorance, fear, and shame should be stopped. The fact that Americans do not automatically

have access to effective sex education creates a terrible situation.

Abstinence-only programs do not teach safe sex. Which means that they don't have to inform students about condoms, birth control, or anything of the sort.

Students shouldn't have to find information by their own means but should instead be able to learn it in the classroom. In short, if schools are going to teach sex education they might as well do it efficiently and effectively.

Proper instruction on human sexuality includes topics such as sexual activity, sexual reproduction, and sexual anatomy. To leave topics out for the sole purpose of delaying sexual activity is nonsense because it is not realistic to believe that students will not have sex if you repeatedly warn them about its repercussions.